THE ORTHODOX WORD

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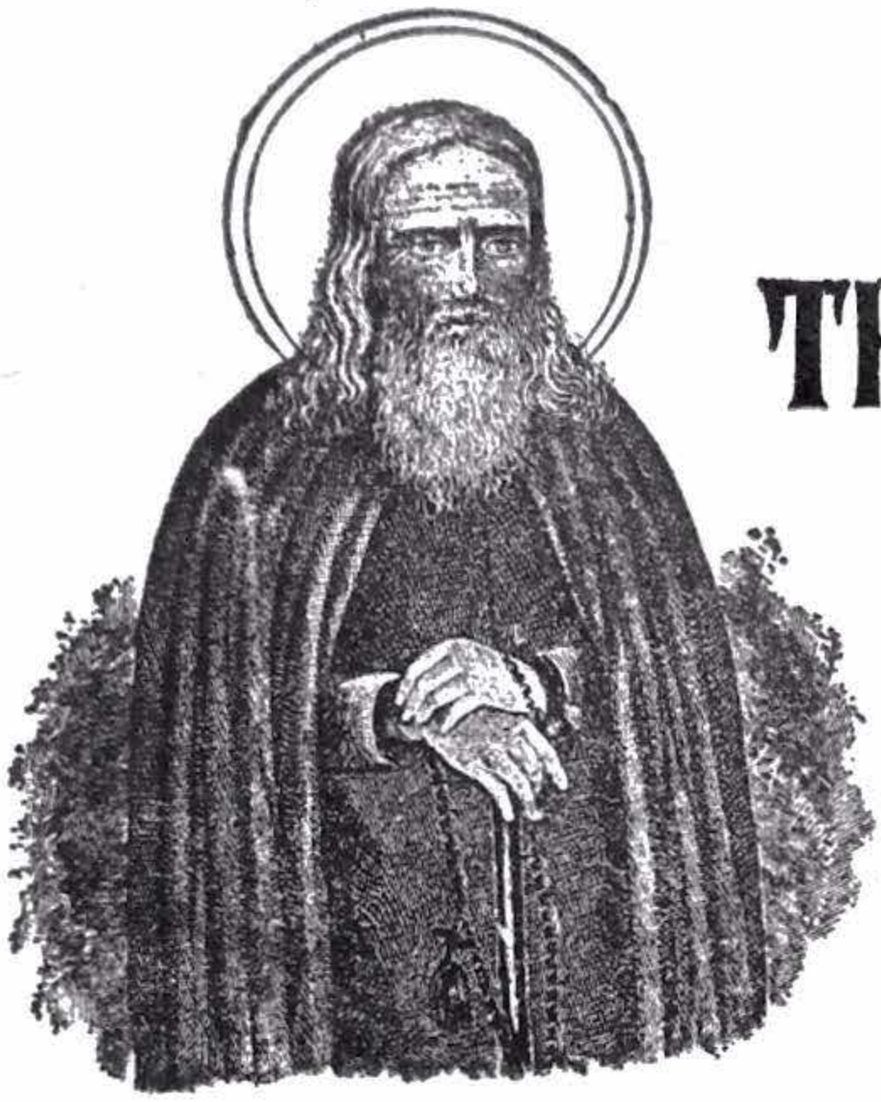
NEW SOLOVKI SAINTS



THE ORTHODOX WORD

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THE SOLOVETSK MONASTERY.

NEW SOLOVKI SAINTS

The following is one of the several moving accounts wherein Prof. Andreyev describes his personal contact with Russia's new saints and martyrs.

Alexander Jacobson

IN THE YEAR 1929, in the frightful concentration camp of Solovki, beginning with the end of winter there was a great increase of scurvy, and towards spring out of 18,000 prisoners of the fourth division of the camp (the division that occupied the island of Solovki itself), the number of those afflicted reached 5000. I, as an imprisoned physician, was offered, apart from my usual work, to take upon myself the supervision of one of the new scurvy barracks for 300 prisoners.

When I came to this barracks I was met by a young Jewish orderly with a very handsome, lively face. He turned out to be a 4th-year medical student. To have such a qualified helper was a great rarity and an immense help. Alexander Yakovlevich Jacobson (such was his name) went around the whole barracks with me and showed me all the patients. Concerning each one, he told me in detail his diagnosis and the characteristic traits of the disease. The patients were all in a very serious condition. Rotting and pussing gums afflicted with the sores of scurvy gangrene, an immense swelling of the joints, bleeding from scurvy in the form of blue spots in the extremities — were what came first to the eyes at a hasty examination. At a more thorough investigation many of them turned out to have serious complications in the inner organs: hemorrhagic nephritis,

pleuritis and pericarditis, serious afflictions of the eyes, and so forth. From the explanations of the orderly I understood that he knew precisely what was what in the symptomatology of diseases, and he made correct diagnoses and prognoses.

Finding out that Alexander was working without stop 24 hours at a time, I sent him off to rest and began to go about and examine the patients alone. In the histories of their disease were registered all the so-called regular facts, that is, first name, surname, date and place of birth, and so forth; the diagnosis was set forth, and subjective complaints were registered. In view of the immense number of patients, I was forced to examine them very hastily and to make extremely brief notes. Nonetheless, my examination, which began at eight in the morning, ended only at 3 a.m., with two intermissions of one half hour for lunch and supper. The next day I again came to the barracks at eight in the morning and found Alexander, who had already gone about all the patients, filling all my prescriptions and gathering information on the most serious cases. He had worked from 12 noon to 8 a.m., that is, 20 hours, again without stop. His face was puffed and had clear traces of serious blows. In reply to my inquiries he told me the following: At 7 am. the barracks had been visited by the Chief of the Intelligence Division (GPU) in the camp. This Chief was drunk. Going about the patients, he asked them whether they were satisfied with the work of the physician and the orderly. Some of the sick prisoners declared that the doctor had only come late at night, "glanced in" and "quickly" looked at "some" of the patients "without giving any help to the seriously ill," while the orderly had come to work yesterday only at 12 noon.

Without investigating whether these complaints were just or not, and without asking any explanations of the orderly, the Chief hit the latter several times in the face and ordered me, as physician in charge of this section, to come to him at 12 noon "for an explanation."

"Alexander Yakovlevich," I addressed the orderly, "I have to go, as you know, for an interrogation. You yourself see how many seriously ill patients there are. Even though your work has already been going on now for a whole 24 hours, could you not work yet another two or three hours until I return (I hope) from the interrogation?"

"Of course, doctor," the orderly replied meekly. "I will remain and look at all the seriously ill."

"Please do, for after all, you see what's what even in the most complicated cases, and I can only thank you warmly for your help. And for my part, I will try to explain to the Chief of the Intelligence Division that he has been unjust to you."

"Oh, do not disturb yourself about me," the orderly cried out in a lively way, "and do not defend me. I had to suffer much more difficult torments without any kind of guilt and I only thank God for them. Remember what St. John Chrysostom said, 'Glory be to God for all things'."

"Are you a Christian, then?" I asked him, astonished.

"Yes, I am an Orthodox Jew," he replied, smiling joyfully.

In silence I shook his hand and said, "Well, good-by. Thank you. Tomorrow we will talk. Pray for me."

"Be calm," the orderly told me in a confidential tone. "Constantly pray to your guardian angel the whole time that you will be at the interrogation. May God preserve you, Doctor."

I went out. On the way I prayed to the Lord, to His Most Pure Mother, to St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, and especially to my guardian angel, fulfilling the good advice of Alexander.

Going into the office of the Chief of the Intelligence Division, for the last time I mentally addressed my guardian angel with the prayer, "Defend me! Enlighten me!"

The Chief met me in silence, severely. With a finger he pointed to a chair. I sat down.

"Tell me, when did you make the rounds of the patients yesterday, and why did your helper, this Jew orderly, go to work only at lunch time?"

Mentally, without words, I called to my help my guardian angel. Trying to be calm, in a quiet, even voice, without hurrying, I related to him everything in detail. I related that by the directive of the Chief of the Sanitary Division I had come to take the barracks at 8 a.m. Finding out that the orderly, after opening a new ward, receiving 300 patients, and preparing everything needed for my coming, had worked without interruption for a whole day and night, I sent him to rest for several hours while I myself took charge of making the rounds of the patients. My rounds took me from eight in the morning until three at night. And in fact, the last group of patients, in the attic, I examined only between two and three o'clock at night. The orderly, after his uninterrupted 24-hour work shift, after sleeping only three or four hours, again came to work yesterday at 12 noon, and is again working without interruption now for a second 24 hours, right up to this moment.

"Then what are those swine complaining about!" the Chief interrupted me. "Tell those good-for-nothings that I'll put them in solitary confinement!"

"It's not their fault," I replied. "After all, they didn't know the working conditions. They told you the truth, that the orderly came to them in

the attic at twelve noon, and that the physician made their rounds only at two in the morning."

"Well," he said, scratching his head and yawning, "well, go."

Coming out of the interrogation, I immediately set out for the barracks-ward. There I found the Chief of the Sanitary Division, a physician who after serving out his term on a criminal charge (for an abortion which ended in death) remained to serve as "freely employed."

The Chief of the Sanitary Division was shouting at the orderly because of something that was out of order. "What an outrage to appear so late for work," he shouted at me. I explained, and he left.

"Why is he so angry at you?" I asked Alexander.

"Because there is a strong odor here. I explained to him that 90 percent of the patients have pussing wounds. Then he cried out, 'Silence!' and then you came in."

"Go and sleep," I told him. "Come at six o'clock in the evening."

For a long time now I had wanted to become better acquainted with Alexander and have a heart-to-heart talk with him; but because we were so extremely busy and exhausted, we could not manage to do this for a long time.

ONCE, HOWEVER, on the Feast of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God, under the pretext of an inspection of a distant work point, I managed to arrange to get both of us assigned together. Early in the morning I came with him from the Solovki Monastery itself, along the St. Sabbatius Road, and after going several kilometers we went off to the side of this road into a pine forest. It was a marvelous, clear, warm autumn day, such as rarely occur on Solovki. In the rays of the sun the birch trees shone with bright melted gold as large spots in the pine forest. This Levitan-like landscape gave a quiet sadness of spiritual joy to the Feast of the Mother of God. Going into the depths of the forest, I sat down with Alexander on stumps, and I asked him to tell me about himself. Here is what he told me:

The son of a merchant of St. Alexander's Market of Petersburg, he lost his parents early and began to go his own way in life. Being a second-year student of the medical faculty, he became acquainted with and a friend of a certain geologist, a Jew who was a Tolstoyite, who attracted him with his tales of Leo Tolstoy and the teaching of the Tolstoyites. A strong impression was made on Alexander, not by the theological works of Tolstoy, but by his tales and stories: "God is Where Love Is," "What Men Live By," and others. In a year, being now a third-year student, he became acquainted with an old physician who had

known Leo Tolstoy personally. This physician, a convinced Orthodox Christian, explained to Alexander the essence of the Tolstoy sect, and revealed to him "the immeasurable treasury of the Orthodox Church." In another year Alexander was baptised and became an Orthodox Christian.

"After my baptism," Alexander related, "I could not look with indifference on religious Jews. The atheist Jews, as the majority are now, did not interest me much. But those Jews who believed in God began to seem to me as simply unfortunate people in error whom I was morally obliged to bring to Christ. I asked why they were not Christians. Why did they not love Christ?"

The disputes and preaching of the newly-converted Jew became known, and Alexander was arrested.

"At one of the camp assignments," Alexander continued, "where I worked at the very difficult common labors, at lumbering, there was an exceptional beast for a Chief. In the morning and evening, before and after work, he would line up the prisoners and order them to sing 'morning and evening prayers': in the morning the 'International,' and in the evening some kind of Soviet song in which were the words 'All of us as one will die for the power of the Soviets.' Everyone sang, but I couldn't; I was silent. Going about the ranks, the Chief noticed that I was silent, and he began to beat me on the face. Then I sang loudly, unexpectedly even for myself, looking at heaven, 'Our Father Who art in heaven.' This beast of a Chief became possessed with malice, and throwing me to the ground, he beat me unconscious with his heels. After being freed from the camp, I received a 'voluntary exile' to the city of Vyatka."

"Well, and how did you settle yourself in Vyatka?" I asked him.

"When I came to Vyatka, a city totally unknown to me, first of all I asked where the church was. (At that time, all the churches had not yet been closed.) When I came to the church, I asked wheher there was not an icon here of St. Tryphon of Vyatka, and when his memory is celebrated. They showed me an icon, and said that the memory of the Saint was to be celebrated the next day, October 8. My heart leaped from joy that St. Tryphon had brought me to his city for his own feast day. Falling to my knees before the Saint's icon, I told him that I had no friends in Vyatka besides him, and that I had no one else to ask help of. I asked that he might arrange life and work for me in Vyatka. After prayer, my heart felt simple, at ease, and quietly joyful — a true sign that my prayer had been heard. Coming out of the church after the All-night Vigil, I slowly walked along the main street, holding under my arms the little bundle with my things. 'Well, my dear, did you just get out of the hospital?' I suddenly heard a pleasant woman's voice saying. Before me an old, plump lady had stopped, with a clean white scarf on her head, modestly, cleanly and

neatly dressed, looking at me with clear, kind eyes. 'No, Matushka,' I replied, 'I haven't come from the hospital; I've come from prison. I was freed from the concentration camp and have been sent to Vyatka.'

"'Oh, for what crimes did you suffer punishment: for thievery, for robbery, for murder?' 'No, for belief in God, and because, being a Jew, I became a Christian,' I replied. A conversation was struck up. She invited me to come in. In her room everything was clean and orderly, and the whole corner above the bed was hung with icons, before which three lamps of different colors were burning. 'Tomorrow is the memory of Tryphon of Vyatka, the defender and protector of our city,' the woman said, and showed me a little icon of the Saint. I fell down on my knees before it and wept from joyful gratitude. And so I arranged to live with this pious widow, and two days later I found work as a truck driver. So I lived peacefully, glory be to God, for half a year, but in the spring I was arrested again and this time received ten years, and came to this holy island of Solovki. Now it is Sts. Zosimas and Sabbatius who are helping me with their prayers."

In silence I walked further with Alexander into the depths of the forest. And suddenly, totally unexpectedly, we stumbled upon an old, half-ruined stone chapel, with the windows and door boarded up. The boards were old and were easily torn off with a little effort. We went into the chapel and saw on the wall a large old icon of the Smolensk Mother of God. The paint on the icon was chipped off, and only the face of the Mother of God was preserved clearly — as a matter of fact, only Her loving eyes.

Alexander suddenly fell down on his knees before this icon, raising both hands high, and in a loud voice he sang, "'Meet it is in truth." He sang the prayer to the end. Something gripped my throat, and I could not sing with my voice; but my whole soul sang and rejoiced, looking at the two pairs of eyes: the loving eyes of the Mother of God, and the contrite eyes of Alexander.

A month after this walk, Alexander was arrested and sent away, no one knows where. The arrest of a prisoner usually ended with the firing squad. (In fact, Prof. S. V. Grotoff, who was in Solovki at that time and knew Alexander Jacobson well as a fellow opponent of Sergianism, testifies that he was shot in 1930.)

Almost forty years have passed since this, and before me there often appears with unforgettable clarity the wondrous picture of the prayer of this Orthodox Jew confessor, before the eyes of the icon of the Mother of God. And I hear his joyful voice resounding with unvanquishable faith and a flaming, deep desire to glorify Her Who is "More honorable than the Cherubim. . ."

The Nuns of Shamordino in Solovki Prison

By I. M. ANDREYEV

IN THE SUMMER of 1929 there came to Solovki about thirty nuns. Probably the majority of them were from the monastery of Shamordino, which was near the renowned Optina Hermitage.

The nuns were not placed in the common women's quarters, but were kept separately. When they began to be checked according to the list and interrogated, they refused to give the so-called basic facts about themselves, that is, to answer questions about their surnames, year and place of birth, education, and so forth.

After shouts, threats and beatings they were placed in solitary confinement, and were tortured by hunger, thirst, and deprivation of sleep; that is, all the usual means of pressure were applied to them. But the nuns remained unbending and even were bold enough — a fact very rare in the concentration camp — to refuse any kind of forced labor.

After several days, I, together with Prof. Dr. Zhizhilenko (who had been sent to Solovki because, while being the chief physician of the Taganka prison in Moscow, he had secretly accepted monasticism and had become a bishop with the name of Maxim) were called to the chief of the Sanitary Division. We were confidentially ordered to make a medical examination of the nuns with a hint as to the desireability of recognizing them as unfit for labor so as to have an official basis to free them from forced physical labor.

It was the first time in the history of Solovki that the administration found itself in such a complicated situation. Usually in such cases they acted very severely and cruelly. After a serious beating of those who refused to work, they were sent to the punishment island of Anzersk, from where no one ever returned alive.

Why these rebel nuns were not sent to Anzersk we could not understand. We gave this question to the chief of the Sanitary Division of the whole camp. He explained to us that the silent, restrained protest of the nuns was

not in the least like the protests with which the administration was used to dealing. These latter protests were usually accompanied by a scene, shouting and hooliganism. But here, there was silence, simplicity, humility and an extraordinary meekness. "They are fanatical martyrs seeking sufferings," the head of the Sanitary Division explained. "They are some kind of psychic cases, masochists, but one becomes inexpressibly sorry for them. I cannot endure to see the humility and meekness with which they bear the pressure. And it is not I only. Vladimir Yegorovich, the chief of the camp, also could not bear this. He even quarrelled with the chief of the Intelligence Division and he wants somehow to soften and iron over this matter. If you find them unsuitable for physical labor they will be left in peace."

When I went out to the barracks where the nuns were kept, I saw extraordinarily sober women, peaceful and restrained, in old, worn-out, and patched but clean monastic garments.

There were about 30 of them. Their age one could give as an "eternal thirty" years, although undoubtedly there were those both older and younger. In all faces there was something from the expression of the Mother of God, "Joy of All Who Sorrow," and this sorrow was so exalted and modest that totally involuntarily I was reminded of certain verses of Tyuchev. Their meek appearance was of a spiritual beauty which could not but evoke a feeling of deep contrition and awe.

"So as not to upset them, I'd better go out, Doctor," said the chief of the assignment who met me, who should have been present as a representative of the medical committee. I remained alone with them.

"Good day, Matushki," I bowed down low to them. In silence they replied to me with a deep bow to the waist.

"I am a physician. I've been sent to examine you."

"We are well. You don't need to examine us," several voices interrupted me.

"I am a believing Orthodox Christian and I am sitting here in the concentration camp as a prisoner for church reasons."

"Glory be to God," several voices again replied to me.

"Your disturbance is understandable to me," I continued, "but I will not examine you. You only tell me what you have to complain about and I will assign you to the category of those incapable of labor."

"We are not complaining about anything. We are quite healthy."

"But without a definition of the category of your inability to work, they will send you to extraordinarily difficult labor."

"All the same, we will not work whether it be difficult or easy labors."

"Why?" I asked in astonishment.

"Because we do not wish to work for the regime of Antichrist."

"What are you saying?" I asked, upset. "After all, here on Solovki there are many bishops and priests who have been sent here for their confession. They all work, each one as he is able. Here, for example, there is the bishop of Vyatka who works as a bookkeeper at the rope factory, and in the lumber department many priests work. They weave nets. On Fridays they work the whole 24 hours, day and night, so as to fulfill their quota extra quickly and thus free for themselves a time for prayer in the evening on Saturdays and on Sunday morning."

"But we are not going to work under compulsion for the regime of Antichrist."

"Well then, without examination I will make some kind of diagnosis for you and give the conclusion that you are not capable of hard physical labor."

"No, you needn't do that. Forgive us, but we will be obliged to say that this is not true. We are well. We can work, but we do not wish to work for the regime of Antichrist and we shall not work even though they might kill us for this."

"They will not kill you, but they will torture you to death," I said in a quiet whisper, risking being overheard; I said it with pain of heart.

"God will help to endure the tortures also," one of the nuns said, likewise quietly. Tears came to my eyes.

I bowed down to them in silence. I wished to bow down to the ground and kiss their feet.

In a week the commandant of the Sanitary Division entered the physician's office and, among other things, informed us, "We're all worn out with these nuns, but now they have agreed to work. They sew and patch up clothing for the central ward. Only they made as conditions that they should all be together and be allowed to sing quietly some kind of songs while they work. The chief of the camp has allowed it. There they are now, singing and working."

The nuns were isolated to such an extent that even we, the physicians of the Sanitary Division who enjoyed comparative freedom of movement, and who had many ties and friends, for a long time were not able to receive any kind of news about them. And only a month later we found out how the last act of their tragedy had developed.

From one of the convoys that had come to Solovki, there was brought a priest who turned out to be the spiritual father of some of the nuns. And, although contact between them seemed, under the camp conditions, to be com-

pletely impossible, the nuns in some way managed to ask directions from their instructor.

The essence of their questions consisted of the following: "We came to the camp for suffering and here we are doing fine. We are together; we sing prayers; the work is pleasing to us; have we acted rightly that we agreed to work under the conditions of the regime of Antichrist? Should we not renounce even this work?"

The spiritual father replied with an uncategorical prohibition of the work.

And then the nuns refused every kind of work The administration found out who was guilty for this. The priest was shot. But when the nuns were informed about this, they said, "Now no one is able to free us from this prohibition."

The nuns soon became separated and one by one were taken away somewhere.

Despite all our attempts we were not able to find out any more news about them. They disappeared without any trace.

Years later, from the mouth of an American prisoner who was in a slave-labor camp, comes the following supplementary information shedding light on the spiritual outcome of the ascetic firmness of such nuns.

THE MIRACLE OF THE NUNS

WHEN THE CONVERSATIONS turned to religion, as they soon did, I heard of an extraordinary happening, a miracle, which had just occurred in Vorkuta. God indeed was there with us! And the eagerness with which the men told me this story left no doubt as to the fact that the Iron Curtain could not keep God out of a country or out of the minds and hearts of its people.

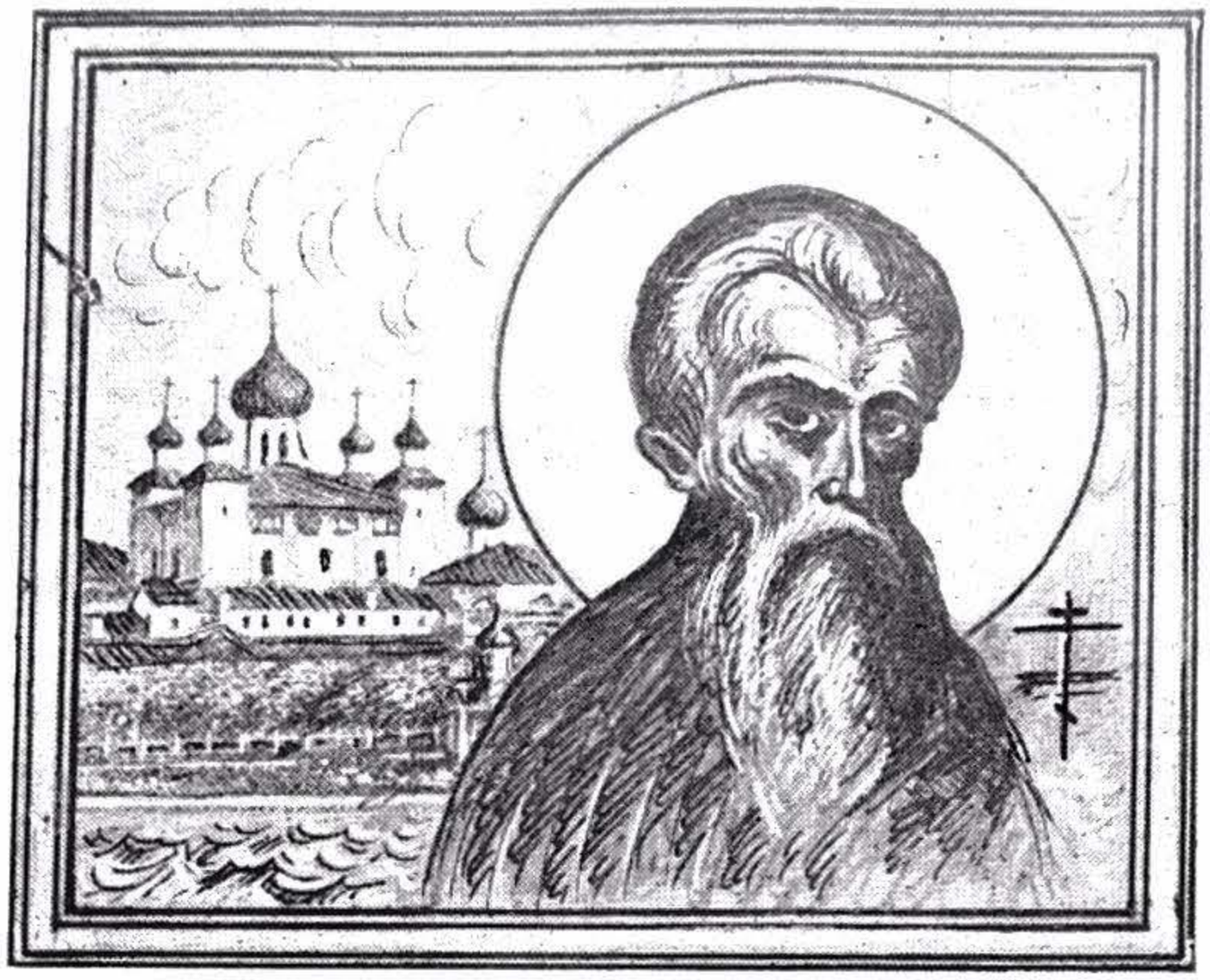
It was in November of that year, 1950, just after our own arrival, that three nuns reached the camp under sentences of hard labor. The many thousand women prisoners at Vorkuta did not work in the mines but performed other rugged work, and the nuns were assigned to a plant which made bricks for construction work throughout the whole Arctic area of Russia.

When the nuns were first taken to the brick factory, they told the foreman that they regarded doing any work for the Communist regime as working for the Devil and, since they were the servants of God and not of Satan, they did not propose to bow to the orders of their foreman despite any threats he might make.

Stripped of their religious garb, the nuns' faith was their armor. They were ready to face anything and everything to keep their vow and they did face

Courtyard of Solovki Monastery, showing main cathedral,
before the Revolution

Courtyard of Solovki today: the Communist prison



Iconographic portrayal of Bishop Maxim
of Serpukhov in Solovki Prison

Main church of the Shamordino Convent just before the Revolution

their punishment, a living testimony of great courage. They were put on punishment rations, consisting of black bread and rancid soup, day after day. But each morning when they were ordered to go out to the brick factory, into the clay pits, or to any other back-breaking assignment, they refused. This refusal meant, of course, that they were destined to go through worse ordeals. Angered by their obstinacy and fearing the effect upon the other slave laborers, the commandant ordered that they be placed in strait-jackets. Their hands were tied in back of them and then the rope with which their wrists were bound was passed down around their ankles and drawn up tight. In this manner, their feet were pulled up behind them and their shoulders wrenched backward and downward into a position of excruciating pain.

The nuns writhed in agony but not a sound of protest escaped them. And when the commandant ordered water poured over them so that the cotton material in the strait-jackets would shrink, he expected them to scream from this pressure on their tortured bodies, but all that happened was that they moaned softly and lapsed into unconsciousness. Their bonds were then loosed and they were revived; in due course they were trussed up again, and once more the blessed relief of unconsciousness swept over them. They were kept in this state for more than two hours, but the guards did not dare let the torture go on any longer, for their circulation was being cut off and the women were near death. The Communist regime wanted slaves, not skeletons. They did not transport people all the way to Vorkuta in order to kill them. The Soviet government wanted coal mined. Slave laborers were expendable, of course, but only after years of labor had been dragged out of them. Thus the commandant's aim was to torture these nuns until they would agree to work.

Finally, however, the commandant decided that he was through trying. The nuns were either going to work or he was going to have to kill them in the attempt. He directed that they again be assigned to the outdoor work detail and, if they still refused, that they be taken up to a hummock in the bitter wind of the early Arctic winter, and left to stand there immobile all day long to watch the other women work. They were treated to this torture, too. When the pale light of the short Arctic day at last dawned, they were seen kneeling there and the guards went over expecting to find them freezing, but they seemed relaxed and warm.

At this, the commandant ordered that their gloves and caps be removed so that they would be exposed to the full fury of the wind. All through the eight-hour working day they knelt on that windy hilltop in prayer. Below them, the women who were chipping mud for the brick ovens were suffering

intensely from the cold. Many complained that their feet were freezing despite the supposedly warm boots they wore. When in the evening other guards went to the hill to get the nuns and bring them back to the barracks, they expected to find them with frostbitten ears, hands, and limbs. But they did not appear to have suffered any injury at all. Again the next day they knelt for eight hours in the wind, wearing neither hats nor gloves in temperatures far below zero. That night they still had not suffered any serious frostbite and were still resolute in their refusal to work. Yet a third day they were taken out and this time their scarves too were taken away from them.

By this time, news of what was happening had spread throughout all the camps in the Vorkuta region. When at the end of the third day, a day far colder than any we had yet experienced that winter season, the bareheaded nuns were brought in still without the slightest trace of frostbite, everyone murmured that indeed God had brought a miracle to pass. There was no other topic of conversation in the whole of Vorkuta. Even hardened MVD men from other compounds found excuses to come by the brick factory and take a furtive look at the three figures on the hill. The women working in the pits down below crossed themselves and nervously mumbled prayers. Even the commandant was sorely disturbed. If not a religious man, he was at the least a somewhat superstitious one and he knew well enough when he was witnessing the hand of a Power that was not of this earth!

By the fourth day, the guards themselves were afraid of the unearthly power which these women seemed to possess, and they flatly refused to touch them or have anything more to do with them. The commandant himself was afraid to go and order them out into the hill. And so they were not disturbed in their prayers, and were taken off punishment rations. When I left Vorkuta four years later, those nuns were still at the brick factory compound and none of them had done a day's work productive for the Communist regime. They were guarded with awe and respect. The guards were under instructions not to touch them or disturb them. They were preparing their own food and even making their own clothes. Their devotions were carried on in their own way and they seemed at peace and contented. Though prisoners, they were spiritually free. No one in the Soviet Union had such freedom of worship as they.

What their example did to instill religious faith in thousands of prisoners and guards there at Vorkuta, I cannot begin to describe. Later on, when I had the opportunity as a locker-room attendant for the MVD men to talk with some of the more hardened Russian Communists about religion, not one failed to mention the Miracle of the Nuns. (John Noble: I Found God in Soviet Russia, Zondervan, Mich. 1971, pp. 112-117).

The Orthodox Veneration of the Mother of God

by Archbishop John Maximovitch

VII

"ZEAL NOT ACCORDING TO KNOWLEDGE" (Rom. 10:2)

The corruption by the Latins, in the newly-invented dogma of the "Immaculate Conception," of the true veneration of the Most Holy Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary.

(Continued)

The Orthodox Church, highly exalting the Mother of God in its hymns of praise, does not dare to ascribe to Her that which has not been communicated about Her by Sacred Scripture or Tradition. "Truth is foreign to all overstatements as well as to all understatements. It gives to everything a fitting measure and fitting place" (Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov). Glorifying the immaculateness of the Virgin Mary and the manful bearing of sorrows in Her earthly life, the Fathers of the Church, on the other hand, reject the idea that She was an intermediary between God and men in the sense of the joint Redemption by Them of the human race. Speaking of Her preparedness to die together with her Son and to suffer together with Him for the sake of the salvation of all, the renowned Father of the Western Church, Saint Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, adds: "But the sufferings of Christ did not need any help, as the Lord Himself prophesied concerning this long before: *I looked about, and there was none to help; I sought and there was none to give aid* (Is. 63:5)" (St. Ambrose, "Concerning the Upbringing of the Virgin and the Ever-Virginity of Holy Mary," ch. 7).

The same Holy Father teaches concerning the universality of original sin, from which Christ alone is an exception. "Of all those born of women, there is not a single one who is perfectly holy, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ,

Who in a special new way of immaculate birth-giving, did not experience earthly taint" (St. Ambrose, *Commentary on Luke,* ch. 2). "God alone is without sin. All born in the usual manner of woman and man, that is, of fleshly union, become guilty of sin. Consequently, He Who does not have sin was not conceived in this manner" (St. Ambrose, Ap. Aug. "Concerning Marriage and Conception"). "One Man alone, the Intermediary between God and man, is free from the bonds of sinful birth, because He was born of a Virgin, and because in being born He did not experience the touch of sin" (St. Ambrose, *Against Julian,* Book 2).

Another renowned teacher of the Church, especially revered in the West, Blessed Augustine, writes: "As for other men, excluding Him Who is the cornerstone, I do not see for them any other means to become temples of God and to be dwellings for God apart from spiritual rebirth, which must absolutely be preceded by fleshly birth. Thus, no matter how much we might think about children who are in the womb of the mother, and even though the word of the holy Evangelist who says of John the Baptist that he leaped for joy in the womb of his mother (which occurred not otherwise than by the action of the Holy Spirit), or the word of the Lord Himself spoken to Jeremiah: *I have sanctified thee before thou didst leave the womb of thy mother* — no matter how much these might or might not give us a basis for thinking that children in this condition are capable of a certain sanctification, still in any case it cannot be doubted that the sanctification by which all of us together and each of us separately become the temple of God is possibly only for those who are reborn, and rebirth always presupposes birth. Only those who have already been born can be united with Christ and be in union with this Divine Body which makes His Church the living temple of the majesty of God" (Blessed Augustine, Letter 187).

The above-cited words of the ancient teachers of the Church testify that in the West itself the teaching which is now spread there was earlier rejected there. Even after the falling away of the Western church, Bernard, who is acknowledged there as a great authority, wrote, "I am frightened now, seeing that certain of you have desired to change the condition of important matters, introducing a new festival unknown to the Church, unapproved by the reason, unjustified by ancient tradition. Are we really more learned and more pious than our fathers? You will say, 'One must glorify the Mother of God as much as possible.' This is true; but the glorification given to the Queen of Heaven demands discernment. This Royal Virgin does not have need of false glorifications, possessing as She does true crowns of glory and signs of dignity. Glorify the

purity of her flesh and the sanctity of Her life. Marvel at the abundance of the gifts of this Virgin; venerate Her Divine Son; exalt Her Who conceived without knowing concupiscence and gave birth without knowing pain. But what does one yet need to add to these dignities? People say that one must revere the conception which preceded the glorious birth-giving; for if the conception had not preceded, the birth-giving also would not have been glorious. But what would one say if anyone for the same reason should demand the same kind of veneration of the father and mother of Holy Mary? One might equally demand the same for Her grandparents and great-grandparents, to infinity. Moreover, how can there not be sin in the place where there was concupiscense? All the more, let one not say that the Holy Virgin was conceived of the Holy Spirit and not of man. I say decisively that the Holy Spirit descended upon Her, but not that He came with Her."

"I say that the Virgin Mary could not be sanctified before Her conception, inasmuch as She did not exist. If, all the more, She could not be sanctified in the moment of Her conception by reason of the sin which is inseparable from conception, then it remains to believe that She was sanctified after She was conceived in the womb of her mother. This sanctification, if it annihilates sin, makes holy Her birth, but not Her conception. No one is given the right to be conceived in sanctity; only the Lord Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and He alone is holy from His very conception. Excluding Him, it is to all the descendants of Adam that must be referred that which one of them says of himself, both out of a feeling of humility and in acknowledgement of the truth: *Behold I was conceived in iniquities* (Ps. 50:7). How can one demand that this conception be holy, when it was not the work of the Holy Spirit, not to mention that it came from concupiscence? The Holy Virgin, of course, rejects that glory which, evidently, glorifies sin. She cannot in any way justify a novelty invented in spite of the teaching of the Church, a novelty which is the mother of imprudence, the sister of unbelief, and the daughter of lightmindedness." (Bernard, Epistle 174; cited, as were the references from Bl. Augustine, from Lebedev.) The above-cited words clearly reveal both the novelty and the absurdity of the new dogma of the Roman church.

The teaching of the complete sinlessness of the Mother of God (1) does not correspond to Sacred Scripture, where there is repeatedly mentioned the sinlessness of the "One Mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ" (I Tim. 2:5); "and in Him is no sin" (I John 3:5); "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." (I Peter 2:22); "One that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15); "Him Who

knew no sin, He made to be sin on our behalf" (II Cor. 5:21). But concerning the rest of men it is said, *Who is pure of defilement? No one who has lived a single day of his life on earth* (Job 14:4). *God commendeth His own love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us . . . If, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life* (Rom. 5:8-10).

(2) This teaching contradicts also *Sacred Tradition,* which is contained in numerous Patristic writings, where there is mentioned the exalted sanctity of the Virgin Mary from Her very birth, as well as Her cleansing by the Holy Spirit at Her conception of Christ, but not at Her own conception by Anna. "There is none without stain before Thee, even though his life be but a day, save Thou alone, Jesus Christ our God, Who didst appear on earth without sin, and through Whom we all trust to obtain mercy and the remission of sins." (St. Basil the Great, Third Prayer of Vespers of Pentecost.) "But when Christ came through a pure, virginal, unwedded, God-fearing, undefiled Mother without wedlock and without father, and inasmuch as it befitted Him to be born, He purified the female nature, rejected the bitter Eve and overthrew the laws of the flesh" (St. Gregory the Theologian, "In Praise of Virginity"). However, even then, as Sts. Basil the Great and John Chrysostom speak of this, She was not placed in the state of being unable to sin, but continued to take care of Her salvation and overcame all temptations (St. John Chrysostom, *Commentary on John,* Homily 85; St. Basil the Great, Epistle 160).

(3) The teaching that the Mother of God was purified before Her birth, so that from Her might be born the Pure Christ, is meaningless; because if the Pure Christ could be born only if the Virgin might be born pure, it would be necessary that Her parents also should be pure of original sin, and they again would have to be born of purified parents, and going further in this way, one would have to come to the conclusion that Christ could not have become incarnate unless all His ancestors in the flesh, right up to Adam inclusive, had been purified beforehand of original sin. But then there would not have been any need for the very Incarnation of Christ, since Christ came down to earth in order to annihilate sin.

(4) The teaching that the Mother of God was preserved from original sin, as likewise the teaching that She was preserved by God's grace from personal sins, *makes God unmerciful and unjust;* because if God could preserve Mary from sin and purify Her before Her birth, then why does He not purify other men before their birth, but rather leaves them in sin? It follows likewise that God saves men apart from their will, predetermining certain ones before their birth to salvation.

The REIGNING Mother of God

(5) This teaching, which seemingly has the aim of exalting the Mother of God, in reality completely *denies all Her virtues*. After all, if Mary, even in the womb of Her mother, when She could not even desire anything either good or evil, was preserved by God's grace from every impurity, and then by that grace was preserved from sin even after Her birth, then in what does Her merit consist? If She could have been placed in the state of being unable to sin, and did not sin, then for what did God glorify Her? If She, without any effort, and without having any kind of impulses to sin, remained pure, then why is She crowned more than everyone else? There is no victory without an adversary.

The righteousness and sanctity of the Virgin Mary were manifested in the fact that She, being "human with passions like us," so loved God and gave Herself over to Him, that by Her purity She was exalted high above the rest of the human race. For this, having been foreknown and forechosen, She was vouchsafed to be purified by the Holy Spirit Who came upon Her, and to conceive of Him the very Saviour of the world. The teaching of the grace-given sinlessness of the Virgin Mary denies Her victory over temptations; from a victor who is worthy to be crowned with crowns of glory, this makes Her a blind instrument of God's Providence.

It is not an exaltation and greater glory, but a *belittlement of* Her, this "gift" which was given Her by Pope Pius IX and all the rest who think they can glorify the Mother of God by seeking out new truths. The Host Holy Mary has been so much glorified by God Himself, so exalted is Her life on earth and Her glory in heaven, that human inventions cannot add anything to Her honor

and glory. That which people themselves invent only obscures Her Face from their eyes. *Brethren, take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ,* wrote the Apostle Paul by the Holy Spirit (Col. 2:18).

Such a "vain deceit" is the teaching of the Immaculate Conception by Anna of the Virgin Mary, which at first sight exalts, but in actual fact belittles Her. Like every lie, it is a seed of the "father of lies" (John 8:44), the devil, who has succeeded by it in deceiving many who do not understand that they blaspheme the Virgin Mary. Together with it there should also be rejected all the other teachings which have come from it or are akin to it. The striving to exalt the Most Holy Virgin to an equality with Christ ascribing to Her maternal tortures at the Cross an equal significance with the sufferings of Christ, so that the Redeemer and "Co-Redemptress" suffered equally, according to the teaching of the Papists, or that "the human nature of the Mother of God in heaven together with the God-Man Jesus jointly reveal the full image of man" (Archpriest S. Bulgakov, *The Unburnt Bush,* p. 141) — is likewise a vain deceit and a seduction of philosophy. In Christ Jesus *there is neither male nor female* (Gal. 3:28), and Christ has redeemed the whole human race; therefore at His Resurrection equally did "Adam dance for joy and Eve rejoice" (Sunday Kontakia of the First and Third Tones), and by His Ascension did the Lord raise up the whole of human nature.

Likewise, that the Mother of God is a "complement of the Holy Trinity" or a "fourth Hypostasis"; that "the Son and the Mother are a revelation of the Father through the Second and Third Hypostases"; that the Virgin Mary is "a creature, but also no longer a creature" — all this is the fruit of vain, false wisdom which is not satisfied with what the Church has held from the time of the Apostles, but strives to glorify the Holy Virgin more than God has glorified Her.

Thus are the words of St. Epiphanius of Cyprus fulfilled: "Certain senseless ones in their opinion about the Holy Ever-Vrigin have striven and are striving to put Her in place of God" (St. Epiphanius, "Against the Antidikomarionites"). But that which is offered to the Virgin in senselessness, instead of praise of Her turns out to be blasphemy; and the All-Immaculate One rejects the lie, being the Mother of Truth (John 14:6).

Next: Summary of the Orthodox Teaching on the Mother of God.

The Epistles of Metropolitan Cyril

(For his Life, see *The Orthodox Word*, 1973, no. 2)

THE MOST EMINENT of the hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church after the death of Patriarch Tikhon was, without doubt, Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan. Chosen by Patriarch Tikhon as the first of the three *Locum Tenens* who would take his place in case of his death or incapacity, he was also chosen by the vast majority (72) of free bishops in 1926 in an unsuccessful attempt to elect a new Patriarch by a secret election. Being in exile in the years after 1925, he was unable to assume the position of *Locum Tenens* (which therefore fell to the second candidate of Patriarch Tikhon, Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa), but his voice was still the most authoritative in the whole Russian Church at that time.

After the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius in 1927, therefore, the opinion of Metropolitan Cyril on this document and on Metropolitan Sergius' "new course" of church action was eagerly awaited. This opinion finally came after about two years, from Metropolitan Cyril's exile in Turukhan in the far north. In this letter, to his friend Bishop Damascene, and even more in his subsequent correspondence with Metropolitan Sergius and other bishops up to the year 1934, Metropolitan Cyril sets forth, perhaps more clearly than any of the other hierarchs of the time, the *ecclesiological* nature of the error of Metropolitan Sergius. His observations on the nature of the Church's unity and oneness of mind, on the necessity to reject canonical legalism in the Church, on the question of breaking communion and on the presence or absence of grace in the Moscow Patriarchate and those who have separated from it, remain very relevant for our own day.

EPISTLE NO. 1: June 6/19, 1929

(Addressed to Bishop Damascene Cedrick, who like him had been in exile in Turukhan, but had then been freed and was temporarily in Starodoub. Translated, with omissions, from the complete Russian text in E. Lopeshanskaya, *Bishop-Confessors,* San Francisco, 1971, pp. 27-35. There is a partial Russian text in Lev Regelson, *The Tragedy of the Russian Church,* Paris, YMCA Press, 1977, pp. 166-168, 466-467. Regelson gives the date as May 2/15 and the addressee as the Kazan vicar-bishop Athanasius Malinin; this is an earlier letter whose content is mostly repeated in the longer letter to Bishop Damascene.)

CHRIST IS IN our midst! Beloved brother in the Lord, dear Vladika, Most Eminent Bishop!

Your letter, weighty in content, of March 1 I received on the Apodosis of Pascha. In truth Christ is risen! What you have written to Father John I have read, thanks to the kind attention towards me of my neighbor. Both what you have said to Father John and your letter of March have consoled me — not by their grievous content, but by the oneness of soul and mind of us both which have been revealed there concerning the opinion of the church scandal which is now occurring. . .

Perplexity with regard to Metropolitan Sergius and the church headed by him could have arisen only because the believers have felt in the administrative-ecclesiastical activity of Metropolitan Sergius an exceeding of the authority which was given him by the title of Substitute of the *Locum Tenens* of the Patriarchal Throne. For me personally there is no doubt that no substitute can be equal in his rights to the one whom he replaces, nor can he take his place. A substitute is assigned for disposing of current affairs, the order of deciding which is precisely defined by the rules in force, by preceding practice, and by the personal directives of the one whom he replaces. No so-to-speak "rights of establishing," as a kind of reform of the existing institutions, the opening of new posts, and so forth, can be given without first asking the agreement and directives of the one being replaced. And a fundamental change of the very system of church administration, which Metropolitan Sergius has ventured on, exceeds the authority even of the *Locum Tenens* himself. . .

(There follows a technical discussion of the institution of *Locum Tenens* under Patriarch Tikhon, in order to show how Metropolitan Sergius has exceeded his authority.)

Therefore, until Metropolitan Sergius abolishes the Synod which he has established, I cannot acknowledge as obligatory for me to fulfill a single one of his administrative-ecclesiastical decrees given with the participation of the so-called Temporary Patriarchal Synod. Such a relationship to Metropolitan Sergius and his Synod I do not understand as a separation from the part of the Orthodox Church administered by Metropolitan Sergius, since the personal sin of Metropolitan Sergius concerning church administration does not do harm to the Orthodox dogmatic teaching observed by this part of the Church also; but I am profoundly grieved that among those bishops who are of one mind with Metropolitan Sergius, in violation of brotherly love, the nickname of "splinter-group" and "schismatics" is already being applied in relation to those who are not in agreement with him and who accuse his wrongness.

I am not separating from anything holy, from anything that authentically belongs to the Church. I fear only to approach and cling to that which I recognize as sinful in its origin, and therefore I refrain from brotherly communion with Metropolitan Sergius and the Archpastors who are one in mind with him, since I have no other means of accusing a sinning brother. The many attempts known to me of personal written brotherly exhortations addressed to Metropolitan Sergius by the reposed Metropolitan Agathangelus, by Metropolitan Joseph and his two vicars, by Archbishop Seraphim of Uglich and Bishop Victor of Vyatka, have not been able to return Metropolitan Sergius to his proper place and to a fitting manner of action. To repeat this attempt of convincing by words would be useless. Therefore, I acknowledge it as a fulfillment of our archpastoral duty for those Archpastors and all who consider the establishment of the so-called "Temporary Patriarchal Synod" as wrong, to refrain from communion with Metropolitan Sergius and those Archpastors who are of one mind with him. By thus refraining, for my part, I am not in the least affirming or suspecting any lack of grace in the sacred actions and Mysteries performed by Sergianists (may the Lord God preserve us all from such a thought!), but I only underline my unwillingness and refusal to participate in the sins of others.

Therefore, I will not liturgize with Metropolitan Sergius and the Archpastors of one mind with him. But in case of mortal danger, with a peaceful conscience I will receive Unction and the final prayers from a priest appointed by Sergius or who submits to the Synod established by him, if there is not present a priest who shares my relation to Metropolitan Sergius and the so-called "Temporary Patriarchal Synod." Similarly, if I find myself in a locality where all the churches are under the "Temporary Patriarchal Synod," I will not enter them to pray at public Divine services, but I acknowledge it as possible, without a preparatory sanctification of the church, to serve Liturgy in one of them either

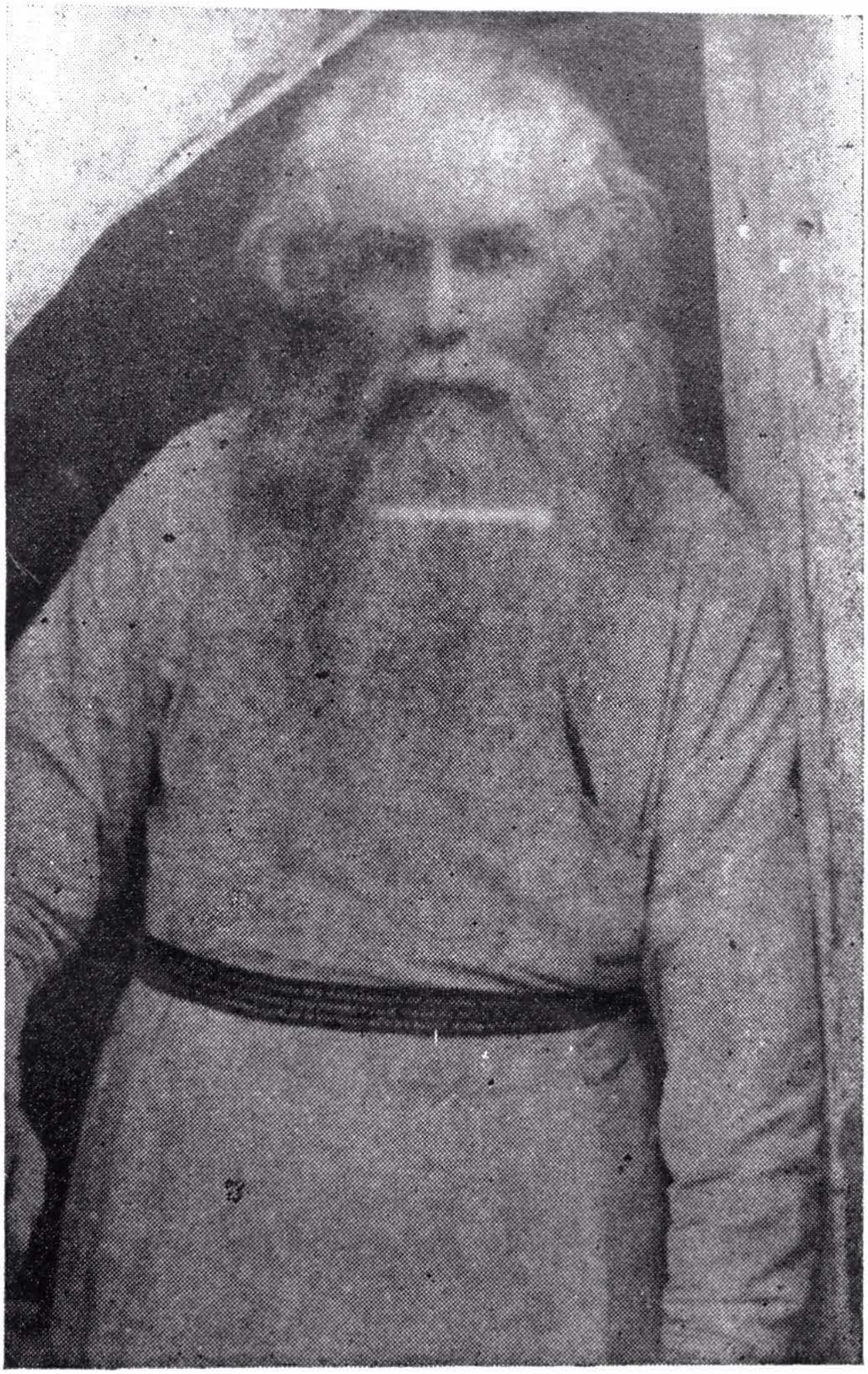
alone or with the participation of clergy and believing laymen one in mind with me, if such ones happen to be there. In my opinion, every clergyman who shares my attitude to Metropolitan Sergius and the Synod established by him can act in the same way.

As for laymen, in all conscience they should not participate actively in the church-parish life of parishes which commemorate the name of Metropolitan Sergius at Divine services as the chief Archpastor. But in itself such a commemoration of the name of Metropolitan Sergius cannot be made the responsibility of laymen and should not serve for them as an obstacle to attending the Divine services and receiving the Holy Gifts in churches which submit to Metropolitan Sergius, if in the given locality there is no Orthodox church which preserves unharmed its canonical relation to the *Locum Tenens* of the Patriarchal Throne. And to pray for Metropolitan Sergius, together with other Archpastors and Orthodox Christians in general (on lists for commemoration at the Proskomedia, molebens, and so forth) is not a sin. This is the duty of all Orthodox Christians, until a general church excommunication shall declare the abuse made by Metropolitan Sergius of the church authority entrusted to him to be a sin unto death. (Matt. 18:15-17; I John 5:16). . .

At the present time Metropolitan Sergius no longer conceals the insincerity of his declaration that the Synod exists with him and falls with him. In a conversation with you he directly declared: "My future successors will be compelled to take into account the situation which I have established in the Church." But in this declaration there is much more human self-assurance than a God-enlightened understanding of his and the Church's situation. It is comprehensible after this that obedience to Metropolitan Sergius, which holds up only on moral authority, has automatically ceased on the part of all sincere Orthodox people. All such ones have said both in their conscience and in the hearing of others that they preserve communion with the Universal Church through the *Locum Tenens* of the Patriarchal Throne, but not through his private delegate.

For me personally everything set forth here is a sufficient feeling-out of a canonical foundation under my feet, and an appeal to Metropolitan Sergius with a cumbersome epistle, it seems to me, would be an unnecessary exaggeration of the church significance of Metropolitan Sergius and a pouring of oil upon the fire of self-esteem which is already burning poor Vladika. There has been no lack of brotherly exhortations with regard to him for these two years; but Metropolitan Sergius is deaf to them. He will not listen to a new one, either, even though it might be the call of one older.

Therefore it is sufficient, it seems to me, for the personal representative of the *Locum Tenens,* if everyone who is not in agreement with his church ac-



Metropolitan Cyril in banishment

Metropolitan Cyril when a young vicar-bishop
in the Petersburg Diocese

tivity should personally bring to his awareness that this activity does not affect us, and we can give no encouragement by our agreement and obedience. One can frankly ask that as long as the so-called "Temporary Patriarchal Synod" exists, Metropolitan Sergius should not trouble to send us his directives, since for them, in our archpastoral conscience, we cannot acknowledge any obligatory significance.

May the Holy Spirit, Who is always in the Church, conduct us through the furnace of the present difficult trials to the greater manifestation of His Truth, lest we in any way decrease in the smallest part of our hope, or become dissolved in thought in this world's evil which surrounds us.

Another epistle of about the same time, which circulated among the episcopate, contains important thoughts on the question of church discipline.

FROM EPISTLE NO. 2: 1929
(Russian text in Regelson, p. 168)

I WILL NOT and do not condemn anyone, but I cannot call anyone to participate in the sins of others, just as I cannot condemn those hierarchs headed by Metropolitan Joseph (Petrovikh) who have confessed their unwillingness to participate in that which their conscience acknowledges as sinful. This confession is reckoned for them as a violation by them of church discipline. But church discipline is capable of preserving its efficacy only as long as it is an actual reflection of the hierarchal conscience of the Catholic Church; and discipline can never itself replace this conscience. As soon as it produces its demands not by force of the indications of this conscience, but by impulses foreign to the Church and insincere, the individual hierarchal conscience unfailingly will stand on the side of the Catholic-hierarchal principle of the Church's existence, which is not at all one and the same thing as outward unity at any cost. Then the instability of church discipline becomes inevitable, as a consequence of sin. And there can be only one way out of sin — repentance and fruits worthy of it. And it seems to me, from my far-away place, that this repentance is equally to be expected from those of Leningrad (i.e., Metropolitan Joseph and those with him) and those of Tashkent (i.e., Sergianist hierarchs) who condemn them. . .

A copy of the first of these letters was sent to Metropolitan Sergius and provoked from him the following reply of September 5/18, 1929 (text in Regelson, p. 469): ". . . Without acknowledging us as either schismatics or as with-

out grace, and consequently having no permissible grounds for a schism, you nonetheless break off communion with us. Can one then agree with you that you are not causing a schism and remain at peace with the Holy Church?

"You have broken off eucharistic communion with us and at the same time do not consider either that you have caused a schism or that we stand outside the Church. Such a theory is entirely unacceptable for church thinking — it is an attempt to keep ice on a hot grill. Of all the visible bonds of the church body, eucharistic communion is the most essential, inasmuch as in its absence the remaining bonds of unity do not hold."

Even before this letter, on July 24/August 6, Metropolitan Sergius and his "Synod" had declared the Mysteries of the bishops who had separated from him to be without grace, comparing their "schisms" to the Renovationists. "The Mysteries performed in separation from church unity. . . by the followers of former Metropolitan of Leningrad Joseph (Petrovikh), former Bishop of Gdov Dimitry (Lyubimov), former Bishop of Urazova Alexis (Bui), as also being in a state of interdiction, are likewise invalid, and those who return from these schisms, if they were baptized in schism, are to be received through the Mystery of Holy Chrismation; marriages concluded in schism likewise are to be completed by the church blessing and the reading of the final prayer in the rite of marriage, 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit.' Those who die in Renovationism and in the indicated schisms may not be given a funeral, even at the great entreaty of relatives, and no memorial Liturgy may be served for them" (Regelson, pp. 168-9). This action, together with Metropolitan Sergius' letter, evoked a new epistle of Metropolitan Cyril, addressed this time directly to Metropolitan Sergius, wherein he treats specifically the "blasphemies" of denying grace in the Mysteries either of Sergianists or non-Sergianists.

EPISTLE NO. 3: October 28-30/November 10-12, 1929
(Russian text in Regelson, pp. 168-9, 469-71)

CONCERNING THESE BLASPHEMIES I learn for the first time from you. As for my only possible attitude to them you can judge at least by the horror with which "I cast away from myself the idea of the absence of grace in the sacred actions and Mysteries performed by Sergianists." You yourself make note of my horror, and when after this you join me also to the number of such blasphemers, you are simply speaking an untruth. If such blasphemies are actually uttered by anyone, they are the fruit of the personal temperament of the speakers, the fruit—I shall say with your own words—of "the unillumined darkness of some and the loss of spiritual balance of others." And how bitter it

is, Vladika, that you also, in an equal degree, reveal the loss of spiritual balance. For your Christian love, which, according to your awareness, has "a certain boldness to believe that the threatening utterance of the Lord (Matt. 12:31 — *Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven)* will not be applied to these unfortunate ones with all strictness," you nonetheless do not dare to find a more loving means of acting on them than the decree of your Synod of July 24 (August 6), 1929, n. 1864, which forbids, in spite of all entreaties, the serving of funerals for those who die alienated from your church administration. Not to mention the re-chrismation of the baptized who have been chrismated with the same Holy Chrism with which the priests obedient to you anoint, or the re-marriages of those already married. In April, in concern over the erring, you busy yourself with the removal of the anathemas of the Council of 1667 (i.e., against the Old Believers), while in August you consolidate the church dispute which has been evoked by your activity and is not yet clear to all, making it an irreconcilable church animosity.

Do not forget that you are creating animosity. . . chiefly against those who, during the existence of Renovationism of various degrees, by their Orthodox feeling, without knowing the written laws, faultlessly determined the authentic church truth and returned to it the shepherds themselves, who were about to waver in their church path as a result of a bookish application of the written canons. In the decree no. 1864 of your Synod I hear a sentence similar to that of the Jewish high priests: *This people that knoweth not the law are accursed* (John 7:49).

This proceeds, of course, from the fact that you and the Synod understand a negative attitude to your activity in church administration to be a denial of the Church Herself, Her Mysteries and all Her holy things. This is why it so amazes you that, while refraining from celebrating Liturgy with you, I nonetheless do not consider either myself or you to be outside the Church. "For church thinking such a theory is completely unacceptable," you declare; "it is an attempt to keep ice on a hot grill." If in this case there is any attempt on my part, it is not to keep ice on a hot grill, but rather to melt away the ice of a dialectical-bookish application of the canons and to preserve the sacredness of their spirit. I refrain from liturgizing with you not because the Mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ would not be actualized at our joint celebration, but because the communion of the Chalice of the Lord would be to both of us for judgment and condemnation, since our inward attitude, disturbed by a different understanding of our church relation to each other, would take away from us the possibility of offering in complete calmness of spirit the mercy of peace, the sacrifice of praise.

Therefore, the whole fullness of my refraining concerns only you and the hierarchs one in mind with you, but not the ordinary clergy, and even less laymen. Among the ordinary clergy there are very few conscious ideologues of your church activity. . .

No matter how much you emphasize the strictness of the judgment of the canons to which you refer in accusing those disobedient to you, your interpretations produce little impression either on those who are disobedient or on the church community as a whole, which is entirely ceasing to trust the dialectical canonics which has developed among us to frightful proportions since the appearance of Renovationism. Remember how, on the basis of canonical literalism, the Renovationist constituent so-called council of 1923 condemned the Patriarch not only to deprivation of rank, but even of monasticism. Therefore, do not misuse the letter of the canonical norms, Vladika, lest we turn the *holy* canons into simple canons. Church life in the last years is composed and actualized not according to the literal meaning of the canons. The very transferral of the Patriarchal rights and obligations to Metropolitan Peter was done in a way unprecedened and unknown to the canons, but the church consciousness accepted this unprecedented way as a means of preserving the wholeness of the Patriarchal order, considering the latter as the chief guarantee of our Orthodox way of life, especially in view of the Renovationist denial of the idea of the Patriarchate.

To this letter Metropolitan Sergius replied with an epistle of December 20/January 2, 1930, defending his "rights" as possessing all the authority of a Patriarch himself. Shortly after this letter Metropolitan Sergius and his obedient Synod announced that Metropolitan Cyril had been given over to a church trial and was relieved of the administration of his diocese; unlike Metropolitan Joseph and other more outspoken opponents of Metropolitan Sergius, however, he was not yet totally interdicted or declared to be outside the Church.

Nothing more was done by either hierarch until 1933, when Metropolitan Cyril was given a brief period of freedom (in the city of Gzhatsk) from his exiles and imprisonments. On July 15/28 of that year he addressed a final letter to Metropolitan Sergius, summarizing his own position (Russian text in Regelson, pp. 175-9). It begins thus (referring to the 70th year of his life, which he had just reached):

"Having reached the age which is, according to the word of the holy Psalmist, the beginning of the boudary of earthly human life (Ps. 89:10), standing, so to speak, at the entrance to the grave, I acknowledge my duty to explain to my brethren, the Archpastors, pastors, and believing people, why I consider you a usurper of church authority and refuse to submit to your admini-

strative-ecclesiastical decrees, as well as those of the Synod which you have established. However, *I have no immediate opportunity to bring my confession to the hearing* of the Church, and therefore I am compelled to do this, addressing it to you who brazenly affirm yourself to be the Chief Bishop of the country, perhaps out of sincere error, and, in any case, with the tacit allowance of a part of the brother bishops, who are now guilty together with you of the violation of the canonical good order of the Orthodox Russian Church."

The rest of this epistle details once again Metropolitan Cyril's reasons for refusing to accept the authority which Metropolitan Sergius was claiming for himself in the Church.

During this time of freedom, Metropolitan Cyril actively entered into contact with — and himself encouraged and organized — "non-commemorators" of Metropolitan Sergius, those who commemorated only the name of Metropolitan Peter at Divine services and were now developing a separate church organization, later to be called the "Catacomb Church." In two epistles written before his next arrest in July, 1934, he gives the canonical foundation for his activity, which continues to be the canonical foundation to this day not only of the "non-commemorating" Catacomb Church in Russia, but also of the Russian Church Outside of Russia. The decree of Patriarch Tikhon of November 7/20, 1920, which Metropolitan Cyril cites as the specific canonical basis for church organization, states that those cut off from contact with the church center in Moscow should organize themselves as well as possible in their circumstances, choosing the eldest among them as their chief hierarch.

EPISTLE NO. 4: January, 1934
(Russian text in Regelson, pp. 179-181)
Reply to the opinion of a certain one that it was indispensable for Metropolitan Cyril to declare himself *Locum Tenens* until the liberation of Metropolitan Peter.

THE DISORDER in the Russian Orthodox Church I view not as concerning the teaching which She holds, but as concerning administration. The preservation of a fitting order in church administration from the death of His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon until the calling of a lawful Church Council is secured by the Testament of His Holiness the Patriarch, which he gave by authority of a special right given only to him, and not to be transmitted to anyone else, to name a Substitute for himself. This Testament is the norm of the administration of the Russian Church until the content of this Testament shall be entirely exhausted. The Hierarch who bears the obligations of the Patriarchal

Locum Tenens preserves his church authority until the election by a Council of a new Patriarch. If there is a delay in the election of a Patriarch, the *Locum Tenens* remains in his post until death, or his own voluntary renunciation of it, or his removal according to an *ecclesiastical* trial. He has no authority to assign for himself a Substitute with rights identical to his own rights as *Locum Tenens*. He can only have a temporary Substitute for current affairs who acts according to his instructions. It is in this point that the error of Metropolitan Sergius is to be found, since he has recognized himself, in the absence of Metropolitan Peter, to have all his rights as *Locum Tenens*. His sin is in exceeding his authority, and the Orthodox Episcopate should not have acknowledged such an authority, and once being convinced that Metropolitan Sergius is administering the Church without the guidance of Metropolitan Peter, it should have been administered by force of the Patriarchal Ukase of November 7/20, 1920, preparing to give an answer of its activity to Metropolitan Peter or to a Council. If the *Locum Tenens* should die before the calling of a Council, it is essential again to turn to the Patriarchal Testament and to acknowledge as having the rights of the *Locum Tenens* one of the still-living hierarchs indicated in the Patriarchal Testament. If none of these is alive, then the effect of the Testament is ended, and the Church automatically goes over to administration according to the Patriarchal Ukase of November 7/20, 1920, and the common efforts of the Episcopate should bring into realization the calling of a Council for the election of a Patriarch.

Therefore, only after the death of Metropolitan Peter or his lawful **removal** do I find it not only possible for myself, but even obligatory, to actively interfere in the general church administration of the Russian Church. Until then, the hierarchs who acknowledge as their Chief Hierarch only Metropolitan Peter, commemorating his name in proper order at the Divine services, and not recognizing the administration of Sergius as a lawful succession, can exist parallel to those who recognize Sergius, until a conciliar trial. Those banished from their dioceses should spiritually guide those few who acknowledge them as their Archpastors, and those who have not been banished should guide the spiritual life of the whole diocese, by every means sustaining ties with each other and church unity.

For me personally it is impossible at the present time to step forth, since I am entirely unsure of the character of the attitudes of Metropolitan Peter, in order to be convinced of his actual views and to decide how to act. In any case, I cannot be the Substitute of Metropolitan Peter in correct order without his decree concerning this. But if Metropolitan Peter voluntarily renounces his post of *Locum Tenens,* then by authority of the Testament of His

Holiness the Patriarch, and of the promise which I gave him, I will fulfill my duty and take up the weight of the post of *Locum Tenens,* even if Metropolitan Peter might have assigned another successor to himself, for he has no right to make such an assignment.

EPISTLE NO. 5: February, 1934
(Russian text in Regelson, pp. 181-184)
To an unnamed Hierarch

CHRIST IS in our midst! Your Eminence, Most Eminent Master, beloved in the Lord, brother Archbishop!

Your lines filled with condescension and trust towards me, a sinner, have furnished me profound consolation. May the Lord save you! You are distressed by my slowness and what seems to you excessive caution. Forgive me for thus distressing you, and be patient a little longer with me. It is not weariness from long wanderings that calls this forth in me, but an incomplete clarification of the conditions which surround me and all of us. I lack this clarity not for an evaluation of the conditions themselves, but for a fitting understanding of the further conclusions from them which turn out to be unavoidable for those who have made these conditions. The putting of these conclusions into practice will probably not be long in coming, and then the presence of facts will convince everyone of the necessity of definite actions according to the needs of the moment.

But are there really so few such facts in existence? you may ask. Yes, they are not few, but the acceptance of them is refracted in the consciousness of the church community into such a variety of tints that they cannot by any means be pinned down to a single common stem. The necessity for a correcting antidote is acknowledged, but there is no common foundation for it, and Metropolitan Sergius well understands the benefit of such a situation and does not cease to take advantage of it. In one of two letters to me he, not without a certain right, indicates this difference of opinion among those who have addressed reproaches to him, and therefore, of course, he does not take them into consideration. The accusation of heresy, even the most decisive one, is capable only of causing a smile on his lips, as a pleasant pretext to console yet again, by means of his mastery of dialectical canonics, those who keep communion with him in assurance of his total irreproachability in relation to dogma.

However, among them there are not a few who see the erroneousness of many of Metropolitan Sergius' measures, but since they understand in the same way he does the source and degree of the authority which he has appropri-

ated, they condescendingly endure this erroneousness as merely a kind of enticement by power, and not as a criminal appropriation of it. Reproaching him with failing to oppose, and consequently of belonging to, a heresy, we risk depriving them of the psychological possibility of re-uniting with us and losing them forever for Orthodoxy. After all, to acknowledge belonging to a heresy is much more difficult than to acknowledge the incorrectness of one's understanding of the outward order of church life. It is necessary that for such ones of noble soul also, the authoritative utterances of Metropolitan Sergius should be explained as his personal invention, and not as a right that is based on the Testament of His Holiness the Patriarch. Everyone must realize that this Testament in no way applies to Metropolitan Sergius and those like him.

Only those three persons mentioned in the Testament could accept the Patriarchal rights and obligations, and only to these three personally belongs the right to step forth as a temporary church center until the election of a new Patriarch. But they cannot entirely give over this right to anyone of their own choice, because the Patriarch's Testament is a document of quite exceptional origin, bound up by conciliar sanction only with the person of our first Patriarch. Therefore, with the death of all three candidates indicated in the Testament, the Testament of Patriarch Tikhon loses its validity, and church administration is to be established on the foundation of the Ukase of November 7/20, 1920. One must also be guided by this Ukase in case of the temporary impossibility of having contact with the person who bears the dignity of the church center by power of the Testament. This is what should hold also at the historical moment which the Church is now going through.

The different understanding of the Patriarchal Testament which is affirmed by Metropolitan Sergius has already led to the fact that the Testament which was left for securing the speedy election of a new Patriarch has become the foundation of the substitution for the person of a Patriarch in the church administration by some kind of collegial "Patriarchate." Whether the blessing of God rests on this undertaking of Metropolitan Sergius we do not dare to judge until a lawful Council by its sentence shall utter the judgment of the Holy Spirit concerning him. However, just as with everything akin to Renovationism, we cannot acknowledge the church administration which has been renovated by Metropolitan Sergius as our Orthodox administration coming by right of succession from His Holiness, Patriarch Tikhon. And therefore, remaining in canonical unity with Metropolitan Peter, the Patriarchal *Locum Tenens,* under the present impossibility of contact with him, we acknowledge as the only legitimate thing the organization of the church administration on the foundation of the Patriarchal Ukase of November 7/20, 1920.

I firmly believe that the Orthodox Episcopate, with brotherly union and mutual support, will preserve the Rūssian Church, with God's help, in age-old Orthodoxy all the time of the validity of the Patriarchal Testament, and will conduct it to a lawful Council. . .

It seems to me that both you yourself and your correspondent do not distinguish those actions of Metropolitan Sergius and his partisans which are performed by them in proper order by power of those grace- given rights received through the mystery of the priesthood, from those other activities which are performed with an exceeding of their sacramental rights and according to human cunning, as a means of protecting and supporting their self-invented rights in the Church. Such are the actions of Bishop Zacharius and Priest Patapov of which you speak. These are sacramental acts only in form, while in essence they are a usurpation of sacramental activity, and therefore are blasphemous, without grace, non-ecclesiastical. But the Mysteries performed by Sergianists who are correctly ordained and not prohibited to serve as priests, are undoubtedly saving Mysteries for those who receive them with faith, in simplicity, without deliberations and doubts concerning their efficacy, and who do not even suspect anything incorrect in the Sergianist order of the Church. But at the same time they serve for judgment and condemnation for the very performers of them and for those who approach them well understanding the untruth that exists in Sergianism, and by their lack of opposition to it reveal a criminal indifference towards the mocking of the Church. This is why it is essential for an Orthodox Bishop or priest to refrain from communion with Sergianists in prayer. The same thing is essential for laymen who have a conscious attitude to all the details of church life.

CONCLUSION

The epistles of Metropolitan Cyril that have come down to us all deal with one and the same question: the canonical position of Metropolitan Sergius in the Russian Orthodox Church. But their significance goes far beyond any mere question of canonical "correctness" or "incorrectness." The canons were made to bring order among Christians, not to force them into a strait-jacket of legalism, and thus the epistles of Metropolitan Cyril, which are full of this awareness, are a guide to us in the difficulties and often unprecedented canonical conditions of 20th-century Orthodoxy. The apostasy of our times, to a degree unique in Christian history, is proceeding not primarily by false teachings or canonical deviations, but rather by a *false understanding of Orthodoxy* on the part of those who may even be perfectly Orthodox in their dogmatic teaching and canonical situation. *A correct "Orthodoxy" deprived of the spirit of true*

Christianity — this is the meaning of Sergianism, and it cannot be fought by calling it a "heresy," which it is not, nor by detailing its canonical irregularities, which are only incidental to something much more important.

Unfortunately, few seem to be able to understand this in our day of deceptive over-simplifications. Metropolitan Sergius himself, despite his theological reputation, could make no sense of Metropolitan Cyril's position, which is nothing but the balanced "royal path" of Orthodox moderation, between the extremes of Renovationism and Sergianist legalism on the one hand, and a too-hasty accusation of Sergianist heresy or lack of grace on the other. Metropolitan Cyril's position is all the more important in that the situation in the 20th-century Greek Church has been very similar to that of the Russian Church: the Calendar reform also was not a question either of heresy or (primarily) of canonical transgressions, and the denial of grace in the Mysteries either of new-calendarists or old-calendarists has only served to increase the spirit of factionalism and to hinder any possible reconciliation of those who stand in the tradition and those who have followed the reformers thus far against their will. Metropolitan Cyril took up the organization of a separate church organization only with great reluctance, and he did so not because he believed that he and his followers alone constituted the true Church, but solely in order to avoid dependence on those whose confession of Orthodoxy had been compromised, even though they were still part of the same Church. The position today of the Russian Church Outside of Russia with regard to the other Russian jurisdictions is identical to that of Metropolitan Cyril with regard to the Sergianist Synod, and her relation to the other Orthodox Churches of the free world is heading in the same direction, although communion with them has not yet been formally broken. Metropolitan Cyril's message of moderation is thus still very applicable in our own day.

Metropolitan Cyril's important distinction between the true Mysteries of Sergianist clergy, and the "usurpation of sacramental activity" manifested in such acts as Metropolitan Sergius' interdictions and excommunications of those who disagreed with his "new church policy," is likewise a fundamental one for our time. The "bookish" application of the canons, which Metropolitan Cyril so severly condemns, cannot understand this distinction; and thus some people can find themselves in a position which may be "legally correct" but is at the same time profoundly un-Christian — as if the Christian conscience is compelled to obey *any* command of the church authorities, as long as these authorities are properly "canonical." This blind concept of obedience for its own sake is one of the chief causes for the success of Sergianism in our century — both within and outside the Moscow Patriarchate. *Of course* the Christian conscience

does not accept the excommunications of a church authority made under political or other non-ecclesiastical pressure (whether from the Turkish Sultan upon the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the 19th century, or the Communist authorities upon the Moscow Patriarchate in our own century), but it is a kind of ecclesiastical legalism to draw from this the conclusion that all the Mysteries of such a church authority are thereby without grace.

The epistles of Metropolitan Cyril present, perhaps as clearly as it can be stated, the truth that the law and teaching of the Church of Christ can never be a matter of merely soulless "obedience." The Catacomb Church inside Russia to this day (to the best of our knowledge), together with the free Russian Church Outside of Russia have not denied the Mysteries of the Moscow Patriarchate, but they hold no communion with it; thus they have no part in the un-Christian acts performed in the name of "Orthodoxy" by the Moscow leadership under Communist pressure, but they are also not deprived of solidarity with a confessor within the Moscow Patriarchate such as Father Dimitri Dudko, with whom full canonical communion is impossible only because of his politically-dominated leadership.

Finally, Metropolitan Cyril's emphasis on the *oneness of mind* of those travelling the path of true Orthodoxy shows us our own path today. The leaders of "world Orthodoxy" are pursuing a ruinous policy of renovationism and apostasy, but it is a hazardous and self-defeating thing to attempt to define the precise point beyond which they, and especially their unwitting followers, will have left Orthodoxy without hope of return. This judgment is not ours to make. But to us is given to stand firm in the true tradition of Orthodoxy handed down to us by our Fathers, to refrain from communion with those who participate in the apostasy from true Christianity, and to seek out those of like mind who are resolved to be faithful to Orthodoxy to the death. On such a foundation the Catacomb Church remains firm to this day in Soviet Russia, awaiting the day when it can freely and openly give its testimony of faithfulness to Christ.

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